

THE PICTURE OF DORIAN
GRAY 239

the thing on purpose, how interesting he would be! I should like to know some one who had committed a real murder."

"How horrid of you, Harry!" cried the Duchess. "Isn't it, Mr. Gray? Harry, Mr. Gray is ill again. He is going to faint."

Dorian drew himself up with an effort, and smiled. "It is nothing, Duchess," he murmured; "my nerves are dreadfully out of order. That is all. I am afraid I walked too far this morning. I didn't hear what Harry said. Was it very bad?"

You must tell me some other time. I think I must go and lie down. You will excuse me, won't you?" They had reached the great night of "steps that led from the conservatory on to the terrace. As the glass door closed behind Dorian, Lord Henry turned and looked at the Duchess with his slumberous eyes. "Are you very much in love with him?" he asked.

She did not answer for some time, but stood gazing at the landscape. "I wish I knew," she said at last.

He shook his head. "Knowledge would be fatal. It is the uncertainty that charms one. A mist makes things wonderful."

"One may lose one's way." "All ways end at the same point, my dear Glad vs."

"What is that?" "Disillusion."

"It was my *debut* in life," she sighed. "It came to you crowned."

"I am tired of strawberry leaves." "They become you."

"Only in public." "You would miss them," said Lord Henry, "I will not part with a petal."

"Monmouth has ears." "Old age is dull of hearing."

"Has he never been jealous?" "I wish he had been."

He glanced about as if in search of something. "What are you looking for?" she inquired.

"The button from your foil," he answered. "You have dropped it."

She laughed. "I have still the mask." "It makes your eyes lovelier," was his reply.

She laughed again. Her teeth showed like white seeds in a scarlet fruit.

Upstairs, in his own room, Dorian Gray was lying on a sofa,